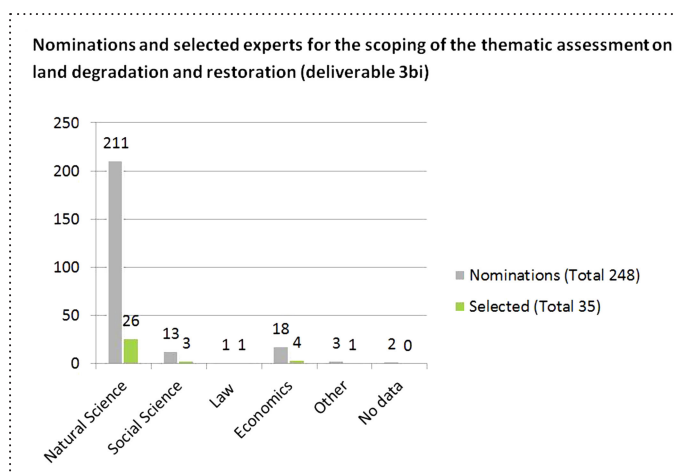


BIODIVERSITY POLICY:

The closing window of opportunity for embedding the social sciences and humanities in the IPBES process¹

The fourth session of the IPBES Plenary (IPBES-4) will be held from 22 to 28 February 2016 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. IPBES-4, where the first summaries for policy makers (SPM) will be presented for approval, and individual chapters and their executive summaries of the associated thematic and methodological assessments will be presented for acceptance, is a critical moment in the process of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). While most assessments of the first IPBES Work Programme (2014-2018) have begun experts from the fields of the social sciences and humanities (SSH) as well as female experts and indigenous and local knowledge holders are markedly underrepresented (see also IPBES/4/15), even despite the IPBES objective that the experts should reflect '[...] the appropriate geographic, disciplinary, gender and expertise balance (terrestrial and marine natural sciences, social and economic sciences, and arts and humanities)' (Figure 1)².



Reasons for this disciplinary imbalance are manifold. They relate to the specificities of biodiversity as a policy issue and scientific object and mirror essential epistemic, normative and institutional barriers between scientific disciplines and different schools of thought, challenging the integration of SSH experts and knowledge in intergovernmental science-policy processes. Yet SSH are needed to balance policy measures for biodiversity conservation with the sustainable use of ecosystems. Furthermore, this need is pressing because of, inter alia, the local and cultural dimensions of biodiversity and ecosystem service use and on-going tensions between industrialized and so-called developing countries on related costs and benefits– both of which involve humans and necessitate the understanding of SSH experts.

The IPBES process recognises these long-standing challenges and has been contributing to a (re-) framing of biodiversity science and policy in normative, methodological and epistemic terms. It uses a conceptual framework (CF) signalling a (pragmatic) shift in the understanding, governance and assessment of biodiversity. The CF builds on three main categories (*nature, nature's benefits to people, and good quality of life*) recognizing the equality and complementarity of intrinsic, instrumental and relational values.

Strengthening the role of SSH experts in the IPBES process will aid the integration of science and other forms of knowledge in support of the application of the CF and the implementation of the first IPBES work programme and will help to tackle the challenges associated with divergent views, norms and values related to the use of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Policy recommendations and associated policy options emerging from a multidisciplinary expert meeting in Bonn in November 2015 offer practical measures to overcome the identified low representation of SSH in IPBES assessment and review processes:

1. The IPBES Secretariat should explicitly refer to SSH experts in their international calls for nominations for assessments, increasing awareness amongst Governments and stakeholder organisations to nominate SSH experts.
2. The IPBES Secretariat should be encouraged to develop and implement a strategy and communication products for 'hard-to-reach' stakeholders outside the traditional scope of biodiversity research and invite those experts to submit applications for IPBES expert groups.

¹ This comment results from a workshop held by the German IPBES Coordination Office in cooperation with the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research on 12 November 2015 in Bonn/Germany.

² By NeFO 10-2015 (Timpke/Apkes) / based on data provided by the IPBES secretariat on 4.8.2014; categories based on (Montana/Borie 2015).

3. The IPBES Secretariat should explicitly invite experts from SSH fields to submit their expression of interests to be nominated for IPBES assessments.
4. The IPBES Secretariat should closely collaborate with National Focal Points (NFP) and scientific associations and stakeholder networks in addressing SSH experts and identifying SSH expertise relevant to IPBES assessments.
5. The MEP and the Bureau of IPBES should ensure that expert teams established to prepare and to review scoping documents include an appropriate number of experts from SSH fields in order to ensure inter- or transdisciplinary assessment processes.
6. The MEP is encouraged to interact with SSH experts and scientific associations to identify relevant research gaps and research needs emerging from the IPBES assessments, particularly regarding methods and themes, to further support the durable involvement of SSH experts in the IPBES and in other science-policy interfaces.
7. The IPBES Secretariat, Bureau of the IPBES and the MEP should ensure political negotiations on assessment titles sufficiently reflect the inter- and transdisciplinary aspects of the CF.
8. The MEP, in consultation with the Bureau of the IPBES, should ensure that SSH experts are involved in regular reviews of the effectiveness of the Platform's guidance, procedures, methods and approaches.
9. The IPBES secretariat and the MEP - in close collaboration with the NFPs and scientific associations- should encourage SSH experts to register on *The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network* (BES-Net) (an online net-working tool for more effective management of biodiversity and ecosystems worldwide, managed by UNDP) and invite young scientists to join and engage with the newly established *Biodiversity Science-Policy Interfaces Network for Early Career Scientists* (BSPIN): an initiative dealing with biodiversity-related science-policy interfaces (SPIs), and to search for pathways to interact in ongoing IPBES assessments.
10. The IPBES Secretariat is encouraged to constantly map and review the disciplinary balance throughout different stages and processes of the IPBES and its products and to increase transparency by making the data publically available.

The overall success of the IPBES will heavily depend on its ability to meet its own objectives, which includes the recognition and relevance of its work within and for science, policy, and society. The recommendations above demonstrate clear ways forward to remedy the lack of SSH expert engagement within the First IPBES Work Programme.

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